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BY

ARTHUR E. BOSTWICK<sup>o c</sup>

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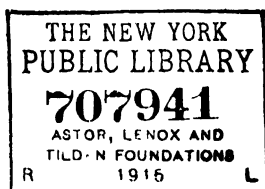
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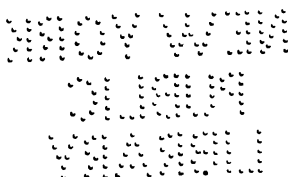


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## PREFACE

THIS series of essays first saw the light in the pages of *The Bookman*, New York, in the issues from October, 1913, to February, 1914. The only changes that have been made in them here are alterations in a few words here and there necessitated by their transfer to book-form.

ARTHUR E. BOSTWICK.

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## I

### *Books as Room-mates*

**T**HE selection of anybody or anything that one is to live with — animate or inanimate — is always an event of moment. But the precise importance of the act, and the way in which it must be done, are closely conditioned by the degree of intimacy of that life and by its relationships. One does not select a cook and a wife in the same way or for the same reasons. A suit of clothes and a picture are not chosen

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for the same qualities. And a book — which is a curious compound of the animate and the inanimate — the recorded soul of a human being clothed in paper and ink — may be selected for reasons that affect only its inanimate part or its soul as well. If it is to serve only as a decoration (“books do furnish a room so!” as we frequently hear it said) the soul may be disregarded; even the paper-and-ink parts of the clothing may be absent. Why should we laugh at the newly rich who lines his “library” with dummies? He knows what he wants, and governs his selection accordingly. The man who buys books because it is the thing to have them, or because he thinks he will some day read them, or because he chooses to be considered “the owner of a library,” will want the paper

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and ink part as well as the binding; but just what it may contain is of secondary importance. The "collector," who wants the books for their fine bindings or the rarity of the edition or the eminence of their former owners, will consider these points, and these only, in making his choice. He is not forming a library at all in the proper sense, and it is only chance that has made the objects of his solicitude books rather than postage-stamps, or pottery, or old guns. His zeal is commendable enough, but it does not bring him within our present purview.

We shall consider only the man who wants his books as room-mates — so near to him that from his accustomed seat he can reach out a hand and select almost any one of them. For such close relationship love is the only tolerable

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condition. The test to be applied here for ownership is the test of personal liking — that, and only that. This means a small collection, except under conditions that we shall consider later. I am inclined to think of a private library as Poe thought of a poem — that a large one is a contradiction in terms. And even the small library is too often a misfit — no indication of its owner's abilities, or tastes, or aspirations. The trouble is that human nature, as in the days of old, still seeks for "a sign." We are readier to do something pointed out by others than to strike out in ways of our own. And yet every advance in civilisation is begun with some unaccustomed act, scandalising or surprising or amusing our less progressive neighbours.

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Particularly do we seem to lack originality in the choice of reading. We demand lists of books that some one else thinks we ought to read or might enjoy, while the great ocean of literature lies all around us to be tested, and cherished or cast aside, as we will.

In taking our physical nutriment we are not so dependent on others' tastes. The invalid, indeed, may obediently eat what his physician commands, and here and there we see a spineless soul who consumes breakfast food or condiment simply because he has seen it advertised over the trolley-car windows or in the pages of his daily paper; but we largely eat what we like. At any rate, no sane person goes about asking for lists of foodstuffs or demanding guidance in a course of eating. There is no reason

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why we should not be at least as independent in our choice of mental nutriment as of physical food. It is proper, we may suppose, to assume that the man who desires to own books has at least read a few, and that among these are one or two that he really likes, probably novels. Selecting one of these, let him re-read it, not critically, but for the mere joy of it. Having done so, let him ask himself, "Why do I like this book?" For the mere story? for the character-drawing? for the description of localities or customs? If the description of locality particularly pleased him, he will probably like another book about the same place, or a neighbouring place, or another place with similar characteristics. After turning over the leaves of a dozen such books, whether fiction or non-fic-

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tion, it will be strange if he does not meet with some paragraph, some chapter-heading, or even some picture that kindles a desire to test the book further. The reading of it may not reveal a book to be owned and re-read; but at least it may lead, by some hint, some allusion, the jogging of some forgotten memory, to another book, or another kind of book, to be read and tested. After a little of this, the reader will find that, instead of wondering what he ought to read, he will have before him hundreds of books that he wants to read and has no time to read. Instead of asking some one for a list that means nothing to him but a present task with possible disenchantment, he will have a list of his own, each one chosen for a purpose and each certainly productive of the joy of test-



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ing as well as bearing the possibility of intimate love and ownership.

Having reached this stage, it may be proper for him to ask advice, for in decrying the blind following of a leader at the outset, I do not mean to exclude the book-buyer from all contact with other human minds. It is one thing to ask, "What shall I read?" and another to say, "I am looking up books on Peru; can you recommend one that you have read?" Only it should be remembered that asking and taking advice are two different things. We may laugh at the man who advises with all his friends and then goes his own way after all; but this may have been the very wisest course. To disregard advice wrong-headedly is foolish; to do so because amid all the possible ways pointed out to you,

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you recognise your own as best, and take it, is the height of wisdom. And in this matter of book-selection one is not confined to a single path. He may have his own way and take the advice of all his friends besides. He may test his own book on Peru and all those that his friends have named to him. He may like none well enough to buy it, or he may love and purchase all — though this is scarcely likely. But if he buys not from love but from mere reliance on advice, then he is false to the principles that I am trying my best now to inculcate.

It will be noted that in the method of book-selection here recommended — the following out of threads of personal interest — it is absolutely necessary to have access to a large collection of books to

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be tested. Fortunately, in the modern public library we have an institution, developed in its present form within the past quarter-century, that fulfils this condition, especially since its adoption of the free-access system by which at least part of its books may be seen and handled with absolute freedom by users. The universal employment of classified arrangement on the shelves enables the user to go without delay to a collection of works on Arctic exploration, or wireless telegraphy, or the German drama, or whatever may be the special subject in which he wishes to subject books to his test. And the prevalence of the circulating feature — the facility with which books may be borrowed for home use, makes the careful reading of the final test possible under the most favorable condi-

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tions. All this would have been impossible fifty years ago. That the trend of the public library, an institution thought by some to make the private ownership of books unnecessary, should have thus been toward conditions that favour the most intelligent and rational selection of books for one's own library is certainly interesting, if not surprising.

The public library may thus perform important functions in the selection of books for private ownership, serving as a great storehouse for reference and for testing one's likes and dislikes. If one can afford it, of course, he may own books for these purposes also, as well as the small, intimate, personal collection that I have chosen to call his library *par excellence*. There must, of course, be some place where the book is seen and

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handled for the first time. The beginner can not tell much from catalogues. This place of first intention may be the public library, or the house of a friend, or a good bookstore. A bookstore can never fulfil the complete functions of a testing laboratory, but to one who desires to own the books that he is testing, as well as those that have passed the test, it is superior in most respects to a public library for the preliminary handling. The ease with which books may be inspected in our best bookstores often puts our public libraries to shame. And not only so, but the bookstore, being a commercial enterprise, naturally carries duplicates in far greater numbers than the library. Where the latter can afford a dozen copies of a popular work, the store has hundreds, and a goodly number of

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them are piled together on its show counters. There is no danger that the book will be "out," or even that it will be in the hands of another curious experimenter. All frequenters are possible customers, and if you are such not only *in posse* but *in esse*, every door will fly open to you.

The real book-enthusiast, of course, will make his tests wherever he finds his material — at library and store, at railway stall and in private collection. The advertisements in the trolley cars and the reviews in the papers and magazines are all so much scent on the trails that he seeks.

The mass of technical literature — the books and magazines about books — the lists, and the lists of lists, and the lists of lists of lists — is confusion worse con-

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founded to the tyro, and it is increasing daily in bulk and complexity. For the man who is beginning to purchase books as room-mates it is better to disregard it all. Later, when he has his bearings, he may profitably use it as "scent" — to use the metaphor employed above. He will never purchase from it directly for his inner circle, but it may guide him to books, especially new ones, that he may want to test. The confirmed book-buyer will spend precious hours running over reviews and lists and auction catalogues with this in view.

It has been suggested above that the branching tree of interest, which alone can bear fruit of good reading, may have its root in the reading of a book. It may, of course, take its origin equally well in anything that may stimulate

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interest. Most men of active minds have these foci of interest entirely apart from books, but it is remarkable how many of them, even those with scholarly and bookish tastes, have failed to realise that these interests may be led, enlarged and expanded by reading. The reason for this is not far to seek. Not so very long ago the subjects of books were predominantly "scholarly" — they were literary, philosophical, speculative. They did not touch daily life or its practical needs in more than one point out of every hundred. The result is that while the traditionally bred man looks to books for information on history, poetry, philosophy or astronomy, he would never think of going to them for data on carpentry or plumbing, for directions regarding factory cost-keeping or the sailing of



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small boats, for instruction in potato-culture or the dressing of windows for advertising purposes. Even those who know vaguely that there are books on all these subjects, and on a thousand others quite as practical, are astonished when they first discover the volume of literature that is available regarding them. The content of our current literature has in fact become enormously enlarged on the side that brings it nearer to life — the life of action, in distinction to the life of speculation or of emotion, which has always been well represented in literature.

The man whose interest is already strong in some subject, such as boat-building, may send for a catalogue of works on the subject, which will give him all he wants to do for years in look-

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ing over books, picking out those for testing, reading them and selecting what he wants for intimate companionship. It is only within the last few years that the public library has discovered this huge, growing annex to literature. It has, indeed, been so tardy in its recognition, that hundreds of special libraries have sprung up, gathered by individuals, firms, associations and companies that are specially interested. We thus have club libraries on yachting or fishing, insurance libraries owned by the great companies, libraries on chemical technology, electric engineering or pottery, collected by industrial organisations. The Bell Telephone Company alone has collected and uses constantly no less than five of these industrial libraries on as many subjects connected with the opera-

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tion of its lines. Many of these libraries, of course, are necessary independently of the existence of great public collections, but many others owe their existence solely to the unaccountable neglect of this great field by the organisations whose particular business it is to get close to the public needs.

Where the book-expert himself has thus erred it is not remarkable that the layman in most cases remains ignorant. Trained to consider a library as a collection of books on literature, history and the pure sciences, it is not remarkable that the content of these special libraries has in most cases remained to him a closed book.

Nor must another influence in this direction, far removed from the scholarly, be overlooked. The so-called "practi-



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cal man," accustomed to look on all "book-learning" as impractical and idealistic, can not quite accustom himself to this invasion of his field by the forces of print and paper. To him a book on plumbing is as ridiculous as one on the Fourth Dimension. Doubtless he has some reason, for at one time exact knowledge of plumbing and of English composition did not reside in the same person, and the latter was often favoured at the expense of the former. This is now rarely the case, but to the "practical" man the fact that information is put down in print still militates against its accuracy.

Readers of these pages may possibly remember a series of comic pictures, running through the daily papers, whose hero was "Book-Taught Bilkins." Bilkins relied on the information to be ob-

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tained from books, and made himself ridiculous, in one instance after another, until he had fatigued the public taste. The significant thing was the reliance of the artist, apparently well founded, on the public recognition, as an elementary fact, of the inherent absurdity of getting anything "practical" out of a book. Thus the uneducated, as well as the educated, classes hold the opinion that books are for the "scholarly" and the "literary" alone.

The book-buyer, of course, may go too far in his reaction against this feeling. If he is a man with a hobby he may become seriously one-sided by following too literally the method of book-selection along lines of personal interest. He may find himself, for instance, collecting a whole library on bee-culture, or aviation,

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or gardening, or pedagogy. Not that this in itself is to be condemned. He may do it; but he should not leave other things undone.' He should search himself, even as if he were apparently devoid of all interests, for those germs of interest that he must possess in other directions. The enthusiastic gardener will be a better man if his library has in it well-thumbed volumes of history, economics or travel; the mechanic will not be harmed by a love of the poets and the essayists; the man who is crazy about numismatics will advantage himself by the perusal of novels. Only — and this cannot be repeated too often — the reading and the owning of all these books must proceed from interest and not from a sense of duty. One's intimate library will reflect his own personality. If he

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is an "all-round" man, it will be an "all-round" library; if he is a faddist, it will be a faddish library; if his tastes are inferior, it will be an inferior library. If the inferior man fills his room with superior books and thinks that he is "improving" himself by that act alone, he is committing a crime against himself. Desire for improvement is commendable, but improvement should — and it always can — proceed in the paths of interest.

The requirement that the books in a real, permanent library — the books that are one's room-mates — should be intimate friends, bars out, almost without exception, the "complete works" of any author whatever. When I see on a friend's shelves, nicely bound "sets" of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott and George Eliot, I grieve — not so much because I

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doubt his taste as because he should have so erred in judgment as to think that his proper and commendable love for the immortal works of these authors should necessitate his taking to his bosom also the balderdash, the "pot-boilers," the failures, among their writings. It is as if, when you invite a dear friend, you should at the same time ask all the rest of the village, including fools, criminals and idiots. Every man and every book should be loved on his own merits.

Once in a while, to be sure, we find a reader whose enthusiasm for an author is so great as to glorify all his inferior works. If such a man really loves every bit that Stevenson, or Pater, or Lamb ever wrote, I have nothing to say against his set of "works"; but such cases are surely unusual.



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And if the "complete works" must be banished, what shall we say of the fortuitous "set" — the books forced together, good and bad, put into uniform, and placed on the market in the hope — too often warranted — that the good will sell the bad? Shall we buy the *Great African Humorists*, the *Patagonian Statesmen*, the *Hawaiian Scientists*? I have indeed written in vain if it is necessary to waste space at this point in answering such a question. These "sets," absurdly high-priced, in innumerable volumes, are rarely to be acquired through the ordinary channels of trade; they are sold by agents, through personal solicitation, and often on the instalment plan, and they have been largely the means of throwing an honourable profession into disrepute. Certain works

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are necessarily and properly sold by subscription; and it is a pity that it has become necessary — as it has — to warn the inexperienced purchaser that he must buy of agents only after careful consideration and the advice of those who know. In any town where there is a public library the telephone will bring such advice willingly from the librarian.

I shall be told, I am sure, that all this is very vague, especially as compared with the delightful directness and definiteness of the adviser who hands you a list of books. This is true. Original work is always more vague and unsatisfactory to a certain type of mind than imitation. The joy of copying can never equal the joy of creation; but it is attained at the expense of far less energy.

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The trouble is that no one can tell his neighbour exactly how to be original.

It may be of interest, in closing these words of advice to prospective book-owners, to say a word about the decline of private ownership of books, which some critics say is upon us. In particular, we occasionally hear the complaint that the public library, by its free lending of books, is discouraging the book-owning habit. This complaint does not come from the publisher and bookseller so often as it did once; for these, apparently, are gradually accepting the librarian's point of view, which is that the public library, by fostering the reading habit on a large scale — a vastly larger scale than that on which it can offer the public loan of books — has been also encouraging a commercial demand

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for literature. And this is doubtless the broader point of view. The existence of cheap restaurants does not lessen the number of housekeepers; nor does the free school interfere with schools and colleges that give education for a fee. In fact, the number of such institutions has multiplied since the free school came into being. Create a demand by creating or stimulating an interest, and you have created a market.

As I have just said, this broader view is coming to be accepted by the book trade. But there is an occasional scholar, one of those who are, at bottom, doubtful of the expediency of educating the masses, who utters a belief that private book-buying is becoming a thing of the past, owing to the activity of the public library. For instance, a newspaper writer recently

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expressed himself thus: "We are simply doing our best to pauperise readers. They know that they do not need to buy books; a benevolent fate will provide them gratis; and so they go without."

The question is, *do* they go without? The yearly reports of the publishing houses do not support such an idea. The very writers who bewail the influence of the Library also lament the flood of literature, overwhelming in its mass, however light and frothy in its quality, that issues yearly from the presses. Booksellers will tell you that comparatively little of this goes to libraries. Librarians have for years been striving vainly to persuade the book trade that the bulk of their purchases entitles them to special consideration in the way of dis-

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counts. We are assured in return that we are wrong — that the amount of our purchases, compared with those that go into private hands, is inconsiderable. There is still, therefore, a vast amount of private ownership of books.

To encourage this ownership, to increase its amount and to enhance its quality, should be the aim of every one who is interested in popular education, and this can best be done, not by advising purchasers to buy books about which they care nothing, but by pointing out to them the way to realise their own personal interests, to extend and expand them by book-reading and book-ownership, and so finally to gather a collection of books that will be the expression of personality instead of merely the embodiment of somebody's catalogue.

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### II

#### *The Art of Browsing*

**T**HE natural way to take nutriment is as one needs it and when he can get it. The latter condition was once of transcendent importance, but the artificial and somewhat abnormal plenty in which most of us live has generally rendered it unnecessary. Over-feeding is now a complaint vastly more prevalent than starvation. Josiah Flynt assures us that any penniless tramp may secure three square meals a day for the asking. He who starves suffers from ignorance and lack of skill rather than from sheer inability to secure food.

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Hence our arbitrary system of three meals a day, at which we often stuff ourselves when we neither need nor want to eat, while the hungry soul who forages for biscuits and jam "between meals" is sternly frowned upon. When we get away from degenerate human nature, all this ceases. Animals have no "meals" except when human captors force them. When the subjective condition — hunger — and the objective — food — are both present, they eat; that is all there is to it.

Fortunately, when we feed the intellectual and spiritual man we are still on the broad plain of free nutrition. We do, it is true, catch our children — poor things — and give them, in our schools, intellectual meals, that most of them take only through forced feeding. That,



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however, does not last long, and then we are free to take our mental food when we like and where we can.

It is a sad fact that as the instrument of forcible nutrition in schools is usually the book, books and all that they contain are often shunned like a plague by the adult. Small wonder; if the goose with a swollen liver should ever get away before he was made into *paté de foie gras*, do you suppose he would return to the feeding-house willingly, or that he would ever look, except with distaste, upon any of the instruments of his nutritional torture? Whatever may be said of our modern systems of education — and I should be the last to decry them, or to deny their continued advance toward increased sanity and usefulness — they have surely not yet solved

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the problem of making us in love with books. Most of us who have this love were born with it, or obtained it elsewhere than in school. Fortunately there is time before school and after school — not to speak of during school — to acquire it. Not that those who fail to do so cease all at once the acquirement of mental food. We feed our minds as constantly as we do our bodies. The man who never sees a book goes on observing, comparing, inferring, elaborating his own personal systems of science, philosophy and religion, learning how to live and forming his own conclusions about the why and whither. His mind comes into contact with other minds in the street, at the corner grocery, in the saloon. He can no more help educating himself than he can help living. The

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book surely has no monopoly as an instrument of education. Nor is there aught magical about it. The animals experimented with by Pawlow, in his classic investigations of the digestive function, thought they were eating; but what they took into their mouths slid from the esophagus into a tube and so out into the world again, never to be digested or to be incorporated with the organism. So, many readers, complacently thinking that they are feeding their minds, are only admitting ideas to the outer passages of their brains, whence they slide out again and are lost. Truly, it is better to feed one's mind without reading than it is to read without feeding.

And yet, without the book, one surely misses something valuable. What we miss is the short cuts, across wildernesses

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of time and space that the unaided mind cannot traverse. Ours is a civilisation of accretion, but it needs some means of keeping the old fresh and vital as well as of bringing the new into organic connection with it. These short cuts to the fountain-heads of our knowledge we get through books. We need these specially, in the affairs of the mind. The forgotten Prometheus who first brought to the cave-dweller the gift of fire may see from some distant Olympus the effect of that gift still in the fulness of its power and use. But what would Plato see, or Aristotle or Homer, if the book had not kept them alive? And how many forgotten philosophers, and scientists, and poets of the days before thought was recorded may there have been, of influence upon their time and

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through our fathers upon us in some distant degree, but wholly without present vitality? If we are truly to live the mental life of to-day, we must have food of yesterday — and of the day before.

Food of the days long past, but not by force. Food that will strengthen because we crave it with the craving that is nature's expression of a need. There are, it is true, the cravings of deep emotion — of passion, which are akin to those of the carnivorous beast that pounces on his prey and tears it, and devours it all at once. There are also the gentler cravings of the herb-eater — the creature that takes its food here and there and everywhere; for minutes, or hours, or days, as the chance may offer. These are the animals that are of use to man — the ones that he delights to breed, and cherish, and

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keep about him, the slow-eating, thoroughly digesting, often ruminating creatures. These love to browse — and the transfer of this term to the leisurely culling of mental food from books gives rise to one of our most complete and satisfying metaphors. Forcible feeding may be occasionally necessary, when the mind, like an incarcerated suffragette, insists on starving itself; the mental orgy of emotion may have its place also; but I prefer to think of the real book-lover as of him who likes to browse in the broad pastures of literature, tasting here and there, eating his fill when he comes to a good place, cleaning up whole clumps at a time, perhaps; moving on when he sees something better ahead and ever stopping to ruminate and assimilate.

And if we are working animals —

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draught oxen perhaps — who cannot browse all day, what we have cropped will still, beyond the threshold of our consciousness, be turning itself into our very substance; and when our daily toil intermits or is done, we can return to our browsing and begin, perhaps, by pulling off the very tuft that we were about to crop when the summons to labour called us away. This browsing metaphor is so inexhaustible that one is tempted to keep on using its language until a talk about books seems turned into a discourse on animal husbandry.

“I have no time to read,” says many a man; we can all pick them out here and there among our kinsfolk and acquaintance. A melancholy confession! We all have time to eat and time to sleep; if we ceased doing one or the

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other, our bodily machines would soon stop working. And when we cease to feed and refresh our minds our intellectual machines will likewise stop. Indeed, the wheels are groaning and creaking a good deal in many that we know. But there is a vast amount of mental feeding and mental exercise outside of books; every one has time for it and so keeps the rust out of his brain. To say, then, that one "has no time" for reading is simply to say that one feeds and refreshes his mind wholly by contact with his friends and neighbours and with the newspaper record of the day's politics and scandal (for this seems not to be accounted "reading" by our complainants). How great a mistake this is, and how the mind suffers from it, we have already seen. Cut your half hour's des-



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ultory gossip with Jones in two and talk for fifteen minutes with Plato, or Mill, or even Arnold Bennett! While you ride from your suburb to your work, cease to gaze at the landscape that you have seen a thousand times, and cast your eye on a few printed paragraphs embodying ideas that are wholly new to you. Read a lyric while you wait for your lunch instead of assimilating the signs that adjure you to "look out for your hat and overcoat." Read, if you must, even while you walk; it is quite possible, at the cost of an occasional collision with a stranger or a barked shin.

There are some who sneer at such casual mental exercise as "superficial" — a sadly misused word. We are always on the surface of things — no mortal yet has reached the hardpan of philosophy.

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The only question is whether our surface shall be an inch thick, or a hundred feet; and this must be answered by our needs. If we try to pass off our inch-deep knowledge for that of a hundred feet we are culpable; but the sin of which we are guilty is not superficiality but deceit. And so I say to the reader: If there are three lyrics of Heine that you love, you may read them a hundred times, if you like, leaving all the others unread. If you are curious about Rochefoucauld's maxims, you may begin in the middle of the book and pick out plums wherever they catch your eye; you shall not be compelled to read from cover to cover. Nay, you shall read the middle chapter of a history, or a book of travel, or a novel, and if you like it not, you may abandon it then and there.

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That the browser may test and reject is one of his dearest privileges, and is perhaps the very thing that makes browsing valuable. Because we have cropped a leaf from a poisonous weed, shall we consider ourselves bound to consume all the leaves of the plant — or the book? On the other hand, one leaf may so fill us with ecstasy that there is no stopping while the plant remains unconsumed. And it will be better for your digestion if you have no time to finish the whole at a sitting. I know of no greater joy than the looking forward to an hour with a loved author, nor of a more life-empty, orphaned feeling than the realisation that you have read all of him. But here is where the mental feeder has the advantage of the physical. For the latter may eat the same food but once,

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whereas the reader may take his twice, a dozen, a hundred times. Blest are the books that please more and more at each re-reading! There are such for every man, though not many for each. They will not stretch across a five-foot shelf by any means, yet on a desert island they would be enough and to spare. The search for them may well occupy a lifetime, and even if we are so constituted that we never find them, in the search itself there is joy. We may run across many friends even if we never find a sweetheart.

It should not be forgotten that one may absorb ideas, whether from books or otherwise, with more than one aim, and with more than one ultimate result. Our object may be simply to increase the store of facts that we know. It is in

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this sense that reading, in Bacon's familiar words, "maketh a full man" — a condition which may or may not be of benefit to him. Or the object may be entertainment — from the most trivial kind of passing of the idle hour to the noblest and best forms of mental recreation. Or the aim of our reading may be — more frequently the result is gained without conscious aim — to stir the springs of action, to set in motion the forces that mould character, better the conditions of life, and ultimately advance civilisation. The sources of ideas such as these, whether they are men, places, or books, we may and do regard with a peculiar affection. We may value and appreciate that which imparts information, but we do not love it. We may seek and enjoy entertainment, but

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it does not inspire us with affection. But that which stirs the soul, kindles the emotions, gives us faith to believe and power to do — that is the thing to love, and when we love books, it is for the inspiration that we find in them, rather than for either information or recreation. And if the kind of reading that fools call desultory is valuable for naught else, it is of inestimable service as a search for books that will thus inspire us.

Only by reading can they be found; for the inspirational book is deeply personal. The strings within us are tuned to many keys: one may wander over the whole gamut before he finds just the tone that will thrill him and set in motion the invisible machine that has been waiting a lifetime for precisely this

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intimate touch. This is why browsing bears a peculiar relationship to bookish inspiration. One may browse also for information or for recreation — for study or for fun — but it is not necessary. If it is desirable that you should perfect yourself in spherical trigonometry you need not hunt through the library before picking out your book. If you want to laugh out loud or to smile inside, you may go straight to your Twain or Holmes; but if you want the book that is for you alone and for no one else — you must hunt for it.

And the great public library movement of the past half century means, among various other things, that the people have decided to provide and pay for their own mental and spiritual hunting grounds. That cities and towns by

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scores and hundreds are cheerfully paying for great collections of books, for buildings to house them and for trained workers to care for them and make them available, means not only that we want to place a particular book quickly in the hands of the man who needs it, but that we desire to give opportunity for search — freedom to the wanderer through the realms of literature to discover whatever therein may feed, or soothe, or stimulate him.

Not that the browser must be always searching. His may be that joy of re-tasting, which we have already touched upon a little while ago. Here he needs no wide collection of the world's literature, but only his own little intimate group of room-mates. It is a curious fact that even when he can repeat from



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memory some favourite bit of narrative, or dialogue, or description — a scrap of verse, a scene from a play, a paragraph of satire — he prefers to take down the volume, turn to the page, and let the passage enter the mind again through the eye.

Those who regard written language as merely a convenience — an arbitrary method of recording the sounds of oral speech, should ponder this fact, and the type of facts that it represents. They surely indicate that written speech and oral speech, whatever their relationships at the point of origin, have in their development become two distinct things. The true book-lover loves to think that when he closes a volume of his favourite author, he is shutting up within it something having a closer connection with

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that author than if its letters were merely phonetic signs indicating sounds made by the writer when he spoke. How often, indeed, were those words never spoken at all! They went from the writer's brain straight to the point of his pen and were so spread on paper — and they lie in the book even as he penned them. That is, they do, unless the spelling "reformer" has laid hold upon them and mutilated them! But this is a digression.

The re-reading of stray bits that one loves is eminently fitted for odds and ends of time. Here is where the pocket-edition comes in. One cannot well take with him in the trolley car or on the train the spreading quarto, the respectable octavo, or even a fat duodecimo. What is needed is something smaller;

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and here again one must go to the bookstore rather than to the library. Librarians frown upon the book of pocket size, because thieves, as well as honest men, have pockets. It is an unfortunate — perhaps a scandalous — fact, that whenever a privilege is offered to the public, scores will be found to abuse it. Apparently there is no middle ground between exclusion and vandalism. When we unlocked the gates of our city squares, there ensued the era of trampled sod and broken shrubs; when we tore down the gratings from the delivery desks of our libraries, unlocked our doors and called the public in, our books began to melt away. No one wants the old régime back, but this is why, when one seeks a convenient book for browsing on the road, while he may select it at the

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library, he must go to the bookstore for his pocket edition.

Perhaps here is the place to point out a rock on which the browser may run. (We have not mixed our metaphors, for there are rocks in the pasture as well as on the main, and our feeder may stub his toe in the lush grass.) Browsing may well fill the intervals when we are free to choose an occupation; it is not meritorious when superposed on what we have to do. I have seen men reading books at lunch — when they were actually masticating their food. I am sure that they both read and ate badly. A farmer's daughter, intellectually inclined, once told me that she kept an open book on one end of her ironing board. "You can pick up lots that way," said she. Possibly; but how

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love browsing and commend the browser, but there will always be the too facile wanderer who needs to be roped to a stake when he feeds; there will always be the barn where dry hay and oats are served instead of the juicy herb. The master of our art of browsing may come to love it not wisely but too well. If his affection for it is safe and sane he will not neglect other modes of feeding, in their proper place.

But no matter how he may use these other modes, and no matter how he may value them, the confirmed browser will always long for the freedom of his broad pasture and for what that freedom inspires. It may be that he will discover a new author, and that he will spend a winter in this author's company, reading book after book, turning back and

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re-reading here and there, feeling all the while as if a door had opened to him in the blue sky, revealing depths undreamed of beyond. The unthinking observer, seeing him thus absorbed, might not recognise him as a browser; for browsing, after all, is not so much an act or a method, as a state of mind. The non-browser goes at an author, or a book, hammer and tongs from a sense of duty. He may, to be sure, go on because he likes it. He may cast off his shackles as he proceeds, and end as a free man. Yet the very fact that he starts shackled is against his success. He purchases his freedom at a great price, if he gets it at all, whereas the browser, like Paul, is free-born.

I trust that the connection of browsing with what I venture to call the

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American method of selecting one's private library is sufficiently apparent. For that selection is made, first by picking out what we want to read and, after the reading, sorting out what we desire to re-read. This is browsing, pure and simple; and the results are more and more satisfactory, the broader the field and the more thoroughly it is covered by the browser's wanderings. Such intricate meanderings take time, and there is, in fact, no time to lose. I have heard a man, past middle age, bitterly complain, on discovering a book that met his fancy, because he had not run across it earlier. He had missed it in his twistings and turnings across the field of literature, because the web that he was thus weaving was of too coarse a mesh. So there were thirty years, on a con-



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servative estimate, irrecoverably lost, so far as that book was concerned. We all have losses of this kind to lament; some of us will never lament, because we shall never discover them. In this case, to twist the old adage a little, it is better to have lost and loved than never to have found at all. Better still is it to rise early and seek. The field is wide; it is strewn with delicacies, and each may be tasted by the diligent.

And how much better it tastes when it is a little troublesome to find! How much more one enjoys a fine view, or a wonderful book, when one is himself its discoverer! The final enjoyment is often proportioned to the labour of discovery. It is a mistake to make these things too easy. When a diner is served with perfect meats of nuts, already re-

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moved from their shells, and with seedless raisins minus stems, he sighs involuntarily for the days when he had to spend precious minutes in digging the nut from its shell. Now he may eat a dozen at a time, if no one is looking — but is that the best way? I am quite sure that cherries are most luscious when one stands on the limb of the tree and reaches for them at the risk of his life; that blueberries are sweetest in a mountain jungle. The effect is not altogether imaginary. Fresh food is surely more satisfying than stale, and berries, or ideas, are fresher when one comes upon them unprepared, as he does when he is browsing.

I sometimes think that we librarians have overdone a little our work of advice, and preparation, and predigestion,

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especially when we have children to deal with. Let us go over our pasture carefully to pluck out all poisonous weeds — and even all indigestible ones, if you like; though nutriment and sweet savour often lurk beneath a tough stem — and then let us encourage browsing! For one cannot begin it too young.

Much of what we are wont to consider as creation is merely selection and arrangement. With the same stock of materials to draw upon, one man will build a beautiful and useful house, another an ugly and inconvenient one. Living in the same world, and coming into contact with the same impressions, one man will build a fine character and another a despicable one. We must all select our own materials and put them together in our own way. The gift of

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written speech ensures that we shall not be limited to the here and the now in our selection of elements for the building of mind and character. We can use the ideas of Socrates or Seneca together with those that we pick up on the street or in the club; we can supplement our American notions with others from Russia, or Arabia, or China. The pasture from which we crop has been wonderfully expanded in space and in time. He who goes farthest afield and is the most catholic in his selection — he who most thoroughly incorporates together what he gathers, by chewing the cud of reflection — he whose normal digestive power makes it all part of his own organism — he is the most successful browser.

We should never forget those last two processes. No matter how widely a man

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may range through time and space to cull the best from the master minds of all eras and all countries, if he has not the ability to fit the bits of his mosaic together into an intelligible pattern, and if he cannot make this pattern a part of his own personal mental organism, so that his thoughts, and his attitudes, and his outlook shall be his own instead of a patchwork of other men's — if he cannot do this, wide though his pasture be, and full of good things, yet he has browsed in vain.

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### III

#### *A Literary Laboratory*

ONE might think, to listen to some current comment, that the public library is an institution intended to make the private ownership of books unnecessary. Were it so, there would be little excuse for its existence — still less for supporting it from the public funds. A man's books should be as close to him as his clothes, and there is no more reason for collecting them all in a central depository than there would be for creating a public clothing warehouse, whence particular garments could be borrowed by individuals.

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The public book collection is not intended as a substitute for the private library, nor does it so act. It may rather be described as an institution one of whose chief functions is to make possible a sane and well-considered private ownership. Some of its books, it is true, are too rare, or too large, or too expensive for the private owner to consider them as possibilities for his own library. Most of the others, too, are books that he would scarcely choose for intimate, permanent companionship. And yet there are potentialities in such a large collection, and the larger it is, the greater becomes the chance of making friends in it — of being able to choose from it the few intimates that are to be the joy of the book-owner's lifetime.

Such a use of a public collection of

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books is peculiarly modern, and it embodies the modern idea of a live, as opposed to a dead, literature. The desire of the book-lover in every age has been to care for the book — to shield it from physical harm, so that his children, and his children's children, should be able to take the same pleasure in it that he himself had taken. But in the old days, the book, regarded as a dead thing, was preserved by seclusion, whereas now it is looked upon as alive, and is kept alive by dissemination.

An object without life, such as a mineral or a fossil, is best kept from harm by locking it in a case. But the preservation of a living thing, or the germ of a living thing, is quite a different matter. What is the best way to ensure that the men of a thousand years hence



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shall have a sufficient quantity of corn, and peas, and beans? Shall we collect all we can and put them into cold storage? Shall we not rather distribute them as widely as possible in good soil, and raise crops? That is what the modern library is doing with literature — treating it as seed, and therefore distributing it as widely as possible. The edition of Shakespeare that your descendant of centuries hence is to hold in his hand will not be any edition now extant, but a copy of a copy of a copy. The fate of literature is closely interwoven with the fate of the race. If the race is to deteriorate, so that it no longer appreciates Shakespeare, his works will vanish, except for a few musty tomes kept as curiosities.

What we are doing is to give every

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writer a fair chance. This has not always been done in the past — it is not always done to-day. It has happened again and again that the works of an author, long issued, but little read, have suddenly become the fashion and have taken a new lease of life, so that it has been necessary to print edition after edition to meet the popular demand. This is because at first the books did not fall into the hands of those who would like and appreciate them. The library, with its ever-multiplying methods of reaching the public, does all that it can to remedy such a state of things.

Not long ago the writer of an article in one of our most popular magazines asserted that the devices used to-day by public libraries to bring the man and the book together, were born of despair,

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caused by waning circulation. Readers were falling off and it had become necessary, we were told, to attract and stimulate them in all sorts of abnormal ways. This is so far from the truth as to be laughable. Librarians have been literally forced into these methods, often sorely against their will, by outside pressure from the public. Scarcely one of the methods of distributing books, or of widening their use, now in vogue has been adopted at first by general consent. Branch libraries, free access to the shelves, special rooms for children, inter-library loans, lectures and exhibitions in library buildings, co-operation with the schools — each plan was strenuously opposed at its introduction by eminent and representative librarians. Each has won its way, not because it was needed to

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bolster up a waning circulation, but because the public liked it, and demanded it, and would not be gainsaid. Evidently the public likes literature, as it likes corn and beans, and approves of the method of preservation by popularisation — by successive sowings and reapings.

The library has used, and will continue to use, measures of publicity; it appreciates, in other words, the value of advertising. Yet the best advertiser is he who has something good for others and who simply disseminates the facts as widely as possible. Didacticism has seldom been successful in the library; apt presentation and spreading of facts almost always bring results.

When these measures come to their complete fruition, every community will have an adequate opportunity to exam-

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ine a wide literary field, to test its likes and dislikes, to form its tastes, to make literary acquaintances, friends and intimates, to worship its literary heroes. Literature is life. We must all live, and we cannot help making contact with the life of others. Literature simply ensures that such contact shall be with the world's life instead of that of our own little parish — with the life of the ages instead of that of a brief day and hour. Does this mean that we need buy no more books? Only to those who get no reaction from these age-long and world-wide contacts. If you can spend your life in a public collection of books and never handle one that you covet, the public collection may be enough for you. But experience does not indicate that this is the way things work out. By noth-

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ing is the desire for personal possession so quickened and aroused as by books. If the reader is dishonest this results in theft, as the libraries know to their cost. Large libraries lose in this way thousands of volumes yearly. Very few of these are ever recovered through the channels of commerce and probably only a small percentage is sold. They were not taken to be sold but to be kept. The thief was a book-lover tempted beyond his power of resistance — this is all. Had he the means, he might have gone to the nearest bookstore to buy a copy of the book instead of appropriating the library's property. And for every man who is thus tempted to steal a book, there must be hundreds who are induced to buy one, in the proportion of honest to dishonest book-lovers in the commu-

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nity. We have record of the thefts so induced, but not of the purchases. If we assume that in a city from whose public library one thousand books are stolen yearly, there are one hundred honest book-lovers to one dishonest one (and Heaven help the place in which there are not more than this), then the library must stimulate the purchase of a hundred thousand volumes yearly. In so doing it is but fulfilling its mission of sowing literature broadcast. So it comes about that the public library, besides its various other functions on which we need not touch here, has become adapted to serve, and does in fact serve, as the testing laboratory for book-purchasers. The tests may be purely empirical, like those employed by Edison, who, if reports are true, has made some

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of his greatest discoveries simply by accumulating a vast store of materials or of chemical reagents and patiently trying one after the other until he finds one that will best serve the particular purpose that he has in mind. I imagine, however, that even in this case there is some preliminary exclusion, made not from actual trial but by reliance on the recorded experience of others. One of Edison's great finds was the carbonised strip of bamboo for the incandescent lamp, which he is said to have obtained in the manner described above. Here he must have limited his tests to substances that appeared likely to serve; it is not probable that he tried limestone, or steel, or molasses. And even in the case of the man most ignorant of literature, it is hardly probable that he would find it necessary in his prelimi-



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nary tests to begin with the bibliographical titles and work down through the whole classification. His object is as clear as Edison's was, although it may not be as definite. He wants books for his collection of room-mates, and he has some vague idea, at any rate, of the kind of companions that he would be likely to cherish most.

We have seen how well adapted the public library is for this kind of preliminary testing, and how the would-be purchaser — sometimes unconsciously, perhaps — does in fact make just this kind of use of it. It does not follow that librarians as a class fully realise this function of their collections or actively aid it. When the widow announced to her little son that she was about to give him a step-father, in the person of Mr.

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Jones, he replied with enthusiasm: "Bully for you, Ma! does Mr. Jones know it?" Knowledge of the part that he was about to play was doubtless necessary in the case of Mr. Jones. It is not so indispensable in the case of the librarian. Sometimes he thinks he is merely the curator of a large collection of literary specimens. He knows that scholars come to peer at them, and measure them, and even to borrow them for closer inspection; but he has no conception of the degree to which they can be used, and are being used, as a kind of huge sales catalogue. The use may and does go on, without his knowledge, but it will go on more widely and to vastly better advantage if he wakes up and consciously furthers what he has before only blindly refrained from interfering with.

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There are already plenty of instances where the situation is realised and action taken accordingly. Librarians are not perhaps generally recognised as the book-purchasing experts of the community. Many of them would be surprised, perhaps, at receiving large numbers of requests about prices, and editions, and dealers. Yet the belief is growing, both among librarians and among the public whom they serve, that this particular kind of service is germane to the library's function, and that, as a perfectly neutral and unprejudiced outsider, it is better fitted to act as adviser in matters of book-purchase than is the dealer himself. Indeed, this is only one more instance of the library's growth of influence through its commanding position of neutrality. It places on its

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shelves books on both sides of all sorts of controverted questions. It welcomes Jew and Gentile, Protestant and Catholic, Democrat and Republican, Capitalist and Labour Unionist. There is no danger that when you ask for books on the tariff it will load you with either free-trade or protectionist literature. Propaganda is the one word that is *not* in its dictionary. This makes it a haven of rest for the weary soul who is sorely beset on all sides with attempts to convert him to some ism or other. It *should* be, and is rapidly becoming, a refuge for the bewildered book-buyer, who is loudly importuned on the one hand to buy foolishly expensive editions and on the other to invest in "series" and "sets" and "complete works" without end. Which is the best cyclopedia? The agent

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will tell you that it is his, everywhere and always. The librarian will ask you just for what purpose you require it, and advise you accordingly. What are the best picture-books to buy for your children? You may see them at the library; and the assistant in the children's room will tell you which will suit your needs. The library, in fact, may save its book-buying public time and money and mortification, simply by giving to inquirers the information that it possesses — that its business is to possess — but that it too often keeps ignorantly or passively to itself.

Many years ago, Dr. Melvil Dewey, in whose fertile brain so many good library ideas seem to have sprouted long before others recognised their importance, suggested that the library might

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even, in the future, actually sell books to its users. In a day when it was considered improper for a library even to let its readers know the price of a book, still more so to betray the place where it might be obtained by purchase, this suggestion was received by one type of mind in awestruck silence and by another with whistles of derision. And yet to-day we find the most progressive libraries furnishing their readers with all the information necessary for the purchase of books, displaying the volumes themselves, recommending editions, stating clearly prices, publishers and book-sellers.

This, it seems to me, is as far as the library is likely to go in the direction of Dr. Dewey's interesting suggestion. Possibly it is as far as he himself in-

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tended. The one additional step, of itself receiving money for the book, instead of merely indicating where it may be bought, is just the step that would take the library out of the position of neutrality that is one of the chief sources of its influence. The moment it should say "buy of me!" it would become an interested party, and its advice would cease to be of value.

Libraries have probably gone farthest in this new function of advice in book-purchase, at the holiday season, when many of them hold exhibits of books recommended for Christmas presents. This has been most widely done with children's books, and the service to perplexed parents has been great, as well as that to the cause of general education. In the St. Louis Public Library an ex-

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hibit of Christmas gifts of books for adults has been held in several successive years, the books being classified according to the nature of the intended recipient, as "Books for the Busy," "For Lovers of Outdoors," "For Amateur Actors," "For Housewives," "For Sportsmen," and so on.

That such exhibitions need not be limited to the holiday season is obvious. Already some publishers and vendors of books on special subjects are issuing neat lists of these books, with prices and other information, in such form that the libraries need not hesitate to accept and distribute them. Others, less astute, have overstepped the line that separates library information from advertising, and their compilations cannot be used. Ultimately, doubtless, a great deal of the



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money that now goes into forms of book-advertising suitable chiefly for the librarian's waste-paper basket will be diverted in a direction where publisher, book-seller, library and the reading public will all benefit by it.

Indeed, we may go further, and look forward to the time when many of our large libraries will serve as general exhibition rooms for the combined book-trade of the country. No library can afford to buy all the books that are published, or more than a small part of them. There are few bookstores in the country — none, except in the largest cities, where one may be sure to find everything of value as soon as it leaves the press. It would seem to be to the advantage of both publishers and the book trade to place on deposit in certain se-

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lected large libraries a copy of each published book with the same regularity as these are sent to the copyright office in Washington. These loans would naturally be kept together in an accessible place for a stated period of time — say one year — and could then be disposed of as might be agreed. They might be returned to the lenders, or the library might be given the option of purchasing such as it might want, at a reduced price, or they might be allowed to remain as a permanent reference deposit. Each volume would be marked with its price and with a list of the bookstores, in the home city, where it could be obtained. Book-lovers would soon come to realise that they could inspect all new books at the public library, whether the library could purchase them or not, and

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publishers would secure the very best possible exhibition-room for their samples, absolutely without cost. The advantage to the library would be obvious.

That the book-trade is beginning to realise the part that the library may play as its chief feeder, is strikingly shown by the attention that it is giving to the monthly *Booklist* of the American Library Association — the organ through which the national organisation of librarians advises its members, particularly the small rural libraries that are badly in need of such advice, regarding the suitability, for library purchase, of the month's literary output. Inclusion in the *Booklist* is coming to be regarded as a special mark of commendation. Such inclusion is heralded in publishers' adver-

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tisements, and whenever the publications of one firm constitute the majority of entries, that firm is apt to announce the fact publicly with considerable pride. A dozen years ago or so, before this publication had been thought of, the writer suggested, in a meeting of librarians, that as book reviews were not generally written from the library's standpoint, we needed our own critical publication in which the particular availability of each book for library use should be duly set forth. This suggestion seemed to meet with disfavour; but in the *Booklist* we now have precisely such a publication.

The same attitude of neutrality that has been emphasised above as a library asset is, of course, the thing that makes commendation by this official organ of

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librarians so valuable. There is no reason why its value should not commend it to the general public as well as to librarians. A little effort to adapt it to that public, possibly by a change of name and of physical make-up, and the supplementing of its notices by exhibitions of the noticed books themselves, in library buildings, would be great steps toward the end already indicated — the complete recognition, by the book-trade and the public, of the library's function as a testing laboratory for book-buyers. Even if publishers should hesitate to place on deposit copies of all their books, they might at least make a beginning by displaying in libraries those publications that have been accorded public praise by the critical organ of the libraries themselves. If copies are sent

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freely to the office of the *Booklist* for examination, with absolutely no guaranty of notice, it would seem to be even better business policy to send them, for certain display, to a large library; and at any rate, volumes already favourably noticed in the *Booklist* might be so sent.

These suggestions look toward making the resources of our laboratory more complete in the direction of current literature; but of course this is not the place to put the emphasis. Even without such co-operation with the book-trade, large libraries include all the books that the world has loved, and most of those that the average book-buyer is likely to take into his heart. He can make his selection from what he finds there, and the lack of a few thousands of

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last year's books, and those of the year-before, will not irk him.

The Public Library, in its present form, has taken shape and has expanded to great proportions within a brief tale of years. This expansion, in the democratic conditions under which it has taken place, is the best possible proof that the library has filled a popular need — that is, unless we are to suppose that it has skilfully blinded the people to its real aims and value. But there are some persons in whose minds success always presupposes doubtful methods. From these we hear occasionally either that the library is going beyond its province, or that its work has been artificially stimulated in some way, or even that the whole programme of public support on which it is proceeding is fundamentally

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wrong. Even so clear-headed a thinker as the late Goldwin Smith said of its work that he believed it no more the duty of the municipality to furnish citizens free books than to provide them with free clothes. The obvious answer to this is that free books are an element in popular education, while free clothes are not. The trouble with Mr. Smith, however, and with those who, like him, think either that the public library is not minding its own business, or that the business itself is not a proper one for the public to carry on — the trouble is that theirs is a limited view; they are scrutinising the trees so closely that they do not see the forest. The whole is not merely the sum of its parts, where those parts are inter-related, any more than the properties of water are merely those



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of its component gases. We cannot predict the services that a collection of books may render, simply by adding together the possible values of its units. Every collector knows that the chief worth of a group of objects often resides in the fact that it *is* a group, apart from the characteristics of the objects separately. So with the library. We might — although we decidedly do not — agree with Goldwin Smith that it is an impropriety for the public to furnish an individual man with an individual book, and yet we might continue to assert the propriety of providing for that man and his fellows a collection of books.

One of the things that a collection can do, as a collection, I have tried to emphasise in what has just been said. It is on functions of this kind that the library

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must rely, in the end, if it is to justify its existence and its support from the public funds. Otherwise we shall have to admire the plan of the Philadelphia alderman who proposed to cut off all library appropriations for buildings and staff, spend all the library money for books, dump them on the City Hall floor and let the public carry them off *ad libitum*. Such a collection would be worth precisely as much as the sum of its components; it is the arrangement, the cataloguing, the environment, the trained assistance, that make it a library instead of a hodge-podge; and all these make possible its use, as a testing laboratory for literature, by every citizen who realises what he may gain by such use. It is thus as a library, with all that the name implies, instead of as a mere

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mass of volumes in juxtaposition, that a public collection properly performs its greatest public service and should make its most effective appeal to the public mind and purse.

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### IV

#### *The Boy and the Book*

**T**HERE is no minimum age for the book-lover or for the book-owner. One may, and should, begin to love books before he knows how to read. To such children reading comes naturally, like speaking. They need no formal instruction in it — or rather, their training began, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes said it should, “a hundred years before they were born.” And if, as the writer of these chapters has been impressing upon his readers, a book owned should be a book loved, so that one’s library is a group of intimates, not

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a throng of strangers, the boy and the girl should begin early to lay the foundations of such a collection, and to lay it in the right way.

The book intended for children's reading alone is a thing of recent date, and its inclusion in the public library is still more recent. A thing of yesterday is the special attention, given to children and their reading, that we now find in every up-to-date library — there was, therefore, until very recently, no such opportunity to survey the field and to pick favourites for purchase, as is now offered to children. Even now there is too little of what I have called the "laboratory" use of the children's collection in a large library, the reason being that the users of that collection are not the purchasers of their own books. Children's books are

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commonly gifts from their elders; and in too many cases their elders are willing to take on trust, especially just before Christmas, anything that is offered them as a "juvenile." The results have been unsatisfactory. One of them is that we have too many "books for children." In many cases the child easily reads and enjoys the same books as his elders. Intelligent children do not like being "talked down to," or "written down to." It is possible, however, to make the opposite mistake of giving children books to read that they find dull or unintelligible, just because the treatment is unsuited for the child's particular stage of mental development. It is possible to arouse in this way a distaste for what is good that may have long-continued or far-reaching influences for evil.

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In my eleventh year I assisted at the establishment of a library in a New England town. So far as I can remember, the idea that it might contain books for children never occurred to any one — least of all to myself or to my companions. We were actively interested in the library, but we drew from it only adult books — our “juveniles” we borrowed from one another. Hence we were reading at the same time Max Muller’s *Chips from a German Workshop* and Oliver Optic’s *Sailor Boy*; Merivale’s *Rome* and Alger’s *Ragged Dick*; Tyndall’s *Lectures on Heat* and Mayne Reid’s *Afloat in the Forest*. It was hit or miss; some of us formed good tastes and some bad ones. I date some of my lifelong friends from that epoch, but I made mistakes whose injurious re-

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sults have also been lasting. I tackled George Meredith too early and have only just succeeded in overcoming my dislike. I did the same with Carlyle, and I can scarcely read him to this day. I am sure that if there had been some recognised relations in those days between libraries and children all of us might have fared better. It might, of course, have been worse. Well-intentioned efforts to ram "good books" down our throats might have resulted in a more serious mental indigestion than that which overtook us when we tried to swallow Meredith and Carlyle out of our own curiosity. Only, the result might have been a distaste for books altogether, such as similar efforts are producing all around us, making lifelong non-readers, or at best readers of drivel,



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out of persons whose mental calibre entitles them to the best that the world of literature affords.

There were, indeed, some feeble attempts at just this kind of thing, but we were strong enough to brush them aside. They were made chiefly in the Sunday-school, an institution which in that day accomplished some good and some evil. I do not intend to discuss it here; but whatever it did, it certainly raised no one's literary taste. The very name of "Sunday-school book" was synonymous in our minds with the vapid, unnatural, goody-goody type of volume issued by the ton by the S. P. C. K. in London and written to-order, I verily believe, by Grub Street hacks at the rate of six a week for so much a dozen. These were the only children's libraries of that day.

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We were too young to be driven to drink by them but not too young to be caught on the rebound by some literature that was below the library standard and below the standard of common morality. All that saved us was that other collection, with its history, its travel and its standard fiction. If you put a rotten apple and a sound one side by side, most normal boys will take the sound one, though if they have no alternative they may nibble into some pretty badly decayed fruit. Most Sunday-school libraries are better now: some have gone out of business and some have adopted a *via media* that is better still; they are confining themselves to aids to religious instruction, leaving general literature to be taken care of by the children's department of the local public library. In those

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days, as I have said, such public libraries as we had included no children's departments, and the first one was not founded for at least ten years after this, when an enterprising New York woman broached the subject in a council of educators. They thought it "tremendous," but it was too vast for them, and as for the libraries, they were still somnolent, although many of the public or semi-public institutions were by that time including children's books in their collections. Every one, adult and child, had to march up to a cage with a "call-slip" and feed with it the animals confined behind the bars, waiting thereafter for time to bring what they wanted, or something "just as good." The open-shelf was then unheard of in libraries of any size. But the new library day was dawning. The

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good New York lady opened her children's library, which lived a precarious life and died. The atmosphere was yet too cold for that little plant, but the sun was up, and things began to get balmy. Shelves were thrown open here, there and everywhere, and when the resulting rush came the children were on top. In their enthusiasm they crowded out their elders altogether, and librarians, in self-defence, had to assign them separate quarters. Everything seemed to work together to push on the modern library movement, and in a trice we had library-schools, branches, travelling libraries, State commissions with their inspection and field-work, fine buildings, increased municipal appropriations, co-operation with the schools, and, last but not least, children's rooms and children's libra-

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rians. What has been done for the children by our libraries for the past few years may appear from a few figures gathered by the present writer for a report to the meeting of the American Library Association in 1913. These statistics show that in fifty-one of the largest public libraries in this country, containing altogether nearly nine million books and having a combined circulation of thirty millions, there are now 1,147,000 volumes intended especially for children, 280,000 having been added during the past year alone. Children draw over eleven million volumes annually for home use. These libraries have 231 rooms devoted entirely to children and 180 for their partial use, with a combined seating capacity of 16,000. Children in these libraries are holders of

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about half a million library cards. There are forty-two supervisors of children's work, with numerous clerical assistants and staffs of nearly 500 persons, many of whom have made the subjects of library work with children and children's reading a matter of special study. Of our schools for the training of librarians almost all give special courses in these subjects and there is one, connected with the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, that devotes itself entirely to training qualified children's librarians.

There has been criticism of this rapid and remarkable development — some of it justified ; but on the whole we may look upon it as not the least of the steps by which, in our reorganisation of the public library, that institution has made good its claim to be an active factor in

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the scheme of popular education. And especially is it to the credit of the children's librarians that they alone, or almost alone, have taken up seriously the problem of children's reading. They have studied it, and they have gone a long distance toward solving it. In some cases they have been prejudiced — a man is tempted to say that their prejudices have been feministic; but, at any rate, these prejudices have been on the side of sanity and morality. And they have upheld the worthy tradition of the library's absolute neutrality, in ignoring commercial and personal considerations altogether. They have calmly thrown out whole series of boys' and girls' books advertised as possessing all the virtues and eagerly loved and desired by a generation of children; simply because these do not

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come up to the standard that they have set up for the library to follow. To the protests of indignant authors, the wiles of publishers and the tearful demands of readers they have turned a front of adamant. The public has smiled, scoffed and scolded, but it is ending by meekly accepting the standards of these library czars — or rather czarinas. In many cases the opponents of their policies have included their own superiors — the chief librarians of their own institutions, whom they have been obliged to convert or coax into compliance. One of the results is often that the standard of a library's children's-room is far higher than that of its adult department. Its range is correspondingly narrower, but this counts but little with childish readers.

It is to the credit of the children's li-



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brarians, also, that a definite scheme of co-operation between the public library and the public school has been adopted in almost all towns where both these institutions exist. With a watchful teacher at one elbow and a watchful librarian at the other, there is little danger either that the child shall not have a sufficiently long list of books from which to select or that this list shall contain anything unworthy.

Children are especially qualified to make selection in the way that we have been recommending. Fitness for re-reading has been our test, and children are specially fond of re-reading, and of repetition of anything that they like. Who has not heard a delighted boy or girl listening for the three hundredth time to a favourite tale, correcting the

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details from time to time, and insisting that the right prepositions and adverbs shall all be inserted in their proper places? When the child learns to read, this fondness for repetition continues, and the well-loved volume of verses or tales is thumbed until it falls to pieces — long, indeed, after the reader knows every word of it by heart. Happy are those of us who retain this fondness for old friends; many of us are laughed out of it, or abandon it from a feeling that it is childish. Its prevalence among children makes it easy for them, or for their elders, to pick out books for their collection of room-mates.

I have spoken above of the work done by children's librarians toward the systematisation of children's reading, and have hinted that its results have not met

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with ready acceptance on all sides, especially in so far as the ruthless exclusion of old favourites is concerned. In particular, there has been wide difference of opinion regarding the expediency of recognising, in books for young people, the evil that there is in the world. Some would have the writer ignore it altogether; some would mention it only to condemn it explicitly; others would give prominence to punishment or retribution, while others still would not object to any true presentation that does not make the evil attractive or seek to excuse it. The first of these four classes, for instance, would not put into any boy's hand a story in which one of the characters pilfers from his employer's cash-drawer. The second would admit such a book, provided the theft were clearly condemned

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in the telling. The third would insist that the story include the arrest and imprisonment of the thief, while the fourth would not object to the incident at all, so long as the book did not incline the reader to pilfer or give the impression that the act was a trivial slip. There can be no doubt that the modern tendency is toward this last point of view, and it should be remembered that it is not necessarily a looser one, or even a more liberal one, than the others. One may condemn an act and even show how it brings retribution, and yet make it so attractive that the reader will think it worth doing. On the other hand one may show wrong triumphant in such a way that its very success may excite all the reader's feelings against it. This is skilfully done in a recent book for

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adults, Frederick Trevor Hill's *Thirteenth Juror*, where the evils of our system of legal procedure are set forth in a story that ends with the complete triumph of an iniquitous cause through the aid of that system. The reader's sympathies are much more powerfully enlisted than if the story had ended with righteousness triumphant.

As for the policy of complete ignorance, one is tempted to say that possibly it might succeed if it could be tried, but it cannot. Certainly it has never yet had a trial. To attempt to keep the knowledge of evil from our children by excluding it from their books is even more futile than the traditional head-hiding act of the ostrich. Most of the readers detect at once the fact that such books are untrue to life, and their falsity

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nullifies whatever influence they might otherwise have. Even in cases where parents have so cloistered their children that they cannot make the comparison that reveals this falsity, the inevitable revelation will come sooner or later, and it is the very worst thing that can happen. I have known young people to be ruined by it rapidly and thoroughly.

The trouble with the sensible way of dealing with this matter is that to create an atmosphere that shall reveal wrongdoing in its moral hideousness, without telling falsehoods or suppressing facts, requires more skill than the ordinary writer of children's books possesses. To write for children a book with all possible good points and none of the possible bad ones is a more difficult task even than writing

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the ideal novel. No one has yet succeeded in doing the latter, and probably the ideal book for children is still farther from realisation.

Lacking ability to create an atmosphere, most writers for the young have striven to impart as much information as they can. Now children are eager for facts; their curiosity is insatiable. Once excite it, and you may fill an octavo volume with what they want, with the certainty that it will all be absorbed. But neither child nor adult wants an exciting narrative interrupted with disquisitions on zoölogy, history or topography. The reader knows and resents the writer's motive, and the "improving" matter is duly skipped. I do not say that it is impossible to convey information in narrative form; but I do say that most of

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the attempts to do so made by writers of children's books are failures.

Another moot question of children's reading concerns the inclusion of brutal, horrible or disgusting details in stories. These are especially frequent in the old folk-tales, and many good persons have been active in expurgating and deodorising these, thereby, in the belief of others, simply spoiling them. There can be no doubt that the imaginations of some sensitive children are injuriously affected by these details. It is equally certain that they have no such effect on others. The end of the Red Riding-Hood story in its classical version, in which the wolf devours the heroine, may keep a child of the former type awake in sleepless terror night after night, whereas to another little one the incident might appear simply



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as a diverting episode. It is not by fiction or folk-lore alone, however, that children are so affected. I once, as a boy, spent an unpleasant week in the house of friends near the scene of the Wyoming massacre, in Pennsylvania, simply because my elders, in describing the event to me, had failed to assure me that its immediate repetition was in the highest degree unlikely. Sensitive children must be treated, not by sheltering them from the grotesque and horrible, but by giving them the power to control their reactions. The old folk-stories are most useful in arousing racial memories and giving a sense of racial continuity. The chief criticism that may be made on our manner of using them is that we do not emphasise the racial element. Our children, most of them of predominant Teu-

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tonic blood, do not have this fact brought before them in their reading, largely because our literary heritage is so overwhelmingly classic. The young student of history sympathises with the Roman, rather than with his own valiant ancestor who defended his home against the Roman legions in the German forests. The boy who studies mythology knows all about Apollo and Minos and Iphigenia when his ideas of Woden and Freya are still hazy. We have to thank the Wagner music-dramas for most of our popular knowledge of the gods whom our own fathers worshipped. Possibly the interest in the Nibelungen trilogy, which is wider than the circle of music-lovers, may be accounted for by the stirring of racial memories. Neither the writers nor the selectors of children's

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books have taken this fact sufficiently into account.

Another element that needs to be more carefully considered in children's books than in those intended for adult reading is the illustration. The "picture-book" excites the wonder and love of the little one long before its text means anything to him. The pictures not only introduce him to literature but also to the appreciation of art. The chief trouble with the comic supplements of the newspapers, so generally condemned by those who have anything to do with the training of children, and so generally read by children in spite of it all, is their atrocious drawing and colouring. It is some consolation to know that the coming generation, which gazes weekly at these horrors, has access to Boutet de Monvel at

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the library and also at home, if the aid and advice of the children's librarian is to count for anything.

The illustrations in story-books are especially important in the case of child readers. Illustrators are notoriously apt to use their own imaginations instead of bothering to read the book in connection with which their work is to appear. They calmly represent girls of sixteen as old women of sixty and stage outdoor scenes in my lady's boudoir. In the last frontispiece at which I had the pleasure of glancing, the young woman shown by the artist on a mountain top in a thin white dress had been more appropriately garbed in tweeds by the author. This sort of thing does not worry the adult reader much. He would probably prefer the omission of this kind of picture, but

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he is tolerant of the publisher's eagerness to provide visual food for a certain type of mind, to supplement the intellectual pabulum offered by the novelist. But the child is not so wise in the world's ways. He has just emerged from an age where the picture is the whole thing; and even at his own age it is still more important than the text. In many cases, a boy or a girl looks at all the illustrations in a book before reading a word of it, getting in this way a preliminary idea of plot, characters and setting. This preliminary idea colours and controls the impressions received through the subsequent reading far more than most adults realise. If the illustrator depicts a heroine as sitting on the limb of a tree when the author says she is out in a boat, the adult reader simply laughs at the artist's error,

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but a child would be more likely to ascribe the error to the narrator. With him the picture is nearer reality than the verbal description.

The half-tone reproduction of the photograph, which has sins of its own to answer for, is at any rate to be commended for obliterating this objectionable personal equation of the illustrator in books of travel and description. In fiction it necessarily persists, and in juvenile fiction it must be reckoned with seriously.

In what precedes it has been assumed that the child meets with books for the first time at home or in the children's room of the public library; in other words, that his first conception of the book is as a friend. In too many cases it comes upon him instead as an enemy. Possibly this is too weak a word; he finds

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it a calamity, a catastrophe, under which he is crushed to earth and from whose overwhelming weight he vainly tries to escape during the rest of his natural life. Does this language seem too strong to depict the effect that some school-books have upon some children who meet books for the first time in connection with a school task? Then we have forgotten our own school days; or if we remember them, we have failed to take into account the fact that we made acquaintance with the friendly book before we came into contact with the inimical one. It is hard to realise the conception of a book formed by one whose only association with books is that of burdensome and distasteful toil.

Not that the school is necessarily blameworthy. Outworn methods may be responsible in part for the pupil's dis-

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taste, but one cannot acquire an education without toil of some kind, in some degree. The unfortunate fact is that this toil should be associated with books, especially in cases where there has been no previous contact with them. The only remedy that I can see is to ensure this previous contact, and to maintain its associations, in the library and at home, through the school period and beyond. The young reader will then learn to discriminate, and all that we shall have to ask the teacher is that he shall not shatter our idols by subjecting them to analysis. The fact that a boy looks with distaste upon his algebra or geometry should not and may not interfere with his love for the really friendly author; but how shall we ever persuade him to recognise the nobility of Milton or the humanity of



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Shakespeare, or the grandeur of Homer, if his first acquaintance with those authors consists merely of a sort of analysis that interests no one but the professional scholar?

All children are individualists; they rebel against group-treatment, even while it is necessary, in the family, the school, the library. Education is largely a struggle to bring them under the yoke of the group, and the attainment of adult age is a recognition of that bondage. "Children," says H. G. Wells, in a recent book, "pass out of a stage — open, beautiful, exquisitely simple — into silences and discretions beneath an imposed and artificial life. And they are lost. Out of the finished, careful, watchful, restrained and limited man or woman, no child emerges again." This is indeed true. But the tone of wistful regret that

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runs through it is hard to understand. Beautiful as childhood is, we should not mourn its development into something else ; and the merging of that fascinating, individualistic frankness into a thing of relationships — restraining and limiting though they be, is but the passing of the child into the man or the woman. The growth of character is largely the growth of control. Whatever is good and noble in us has a chance to sprout and burgeon because we have learned to restrain and limit our primitive impulses. When the bonds of that control slacken and our “silences and discretions” cease to be, our friends recognise that something abnormal has come to pass ; presently they take us and place upon us the restraint that we no longer know how to place upon ourselves. “The child,” says

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Mr. Wells, "carries off the growing jewel of its consciousness to hide from all mankind." It is well to see that this jewel is of the true water, and not merely paste. The consciousness that the child carries from boyhood to manhood or from girlhood to womanhood should be the broad consciousness of humanity, which is common to all ages. The really human book will arouse and maintain this consciousness as no other influence will. And the open-hearted child who has taken into that heart of his the human feeling of true and noble books, will retain it in the "finished, careful, watchful" adult age, so that its very limits and restraints may be but elements of the control that makes for character.

It has been said that the most important thing about a man is his philosophy.

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Now philosophies are developed, not taught. Neither the man who believes that "nothing is new, nothing is true, and nothing matters," nor the one who is sure that all creation is moving toward "one far-off divine event," acquired his faith in school. Each is the resultant of a thousand mental and spiritual contacts, at home and abroad, in church, club, business and pleasure. It is in our power to see that a large proportion of these contacts in the case of our growing children are with the minds of the good and great, through books. It is worth our while to do so, and worth the while of the community and the race; for by a man's philosophy he lives, and the mental associations of our children of to-day will largely determine the attitudes, aims and achievements of the men and women of to-morrow.

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### V

#### *Recuperative Bibliophily*

**N**EITHER a borrower nor a lender be," says Polonius to his son. We all nod our heads in approval as we read, and then we keep on borrowing and lending, just as before. The fact is that borrowing and lending are necessary in our social and economic system: they are the one concession of that system in the direction of communism. The man who would hesitate to share the ownership of his goods with those who lack them will occasionally part with some of them provisionally and temporarily by way of a loan. The

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man who would die rather than ask an alms, out and out, will gladly borrow, if he can find some one to lend to him. The trouble is that all this lending and borrowing, which should be but a temporary transfer of ownership, amounts in many cases to the permanent transfer which it professes not to be. This is notoriously the case with certain small objects — umbrellas, for instance. It is unfortunately coming to be so with books. The man who is asked to lend a book nowadays thinks not so much of his willingness to lend as of the possibility of losing sight of his property altogether. He can rely neither on the mental ability nor on the general character of the would-be borrower, for these have proved no bars to the appropriation of property in books. It is not so much wilful

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retention as the absence of a stimulus to restitution. The borrower sees the volume occasionally and lazily recognises its ownership. "Oh, there is that book of Smith's," he says to himself; "I must leave that at his house some day in passing." If he had borrowed a horse of Smith and the sight of the animal evoked no more potent reaction, he would be looked upon as dishonest. But "books are different," and it is because they are different that this chapter becomes the fitting climax to a book on "The Making of an American's Library." For a library, being a collection, is formed by accretion, and it is accretion in the net, not the gross, that is effective. What a man has, in the way of a library, is not what he has acquired, but that sum diminished by what his friends have borrowed.

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There was a time when, if a man had no funds to buy books, he must perforce borrow from his friends, if he would read at all. Literature thus teems with allusions to book-lending and book-borrowing; to the unappreciative borrower and the borrower who does not return his loan — the man who, to quote Lord Eldon's witticism, is "backward in accounting but practised in book-keeping;" to the churlish lender and the selfish owners who refuse to lend at all — those whom Rabelais savagely terms the "rascally rabble of people who will not lend."

Leigh Hunt, in his essay on "My Books," calls himself a "meek son in a family of book-losers," and asserts that he lost half a dozen decent-sized libraries before his thirty-eighth year. He casti-



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gates, under the revealing disguise of initials, the friends who have borrowed his books, never to return them; yet he confesses that he himself never sees an interesting book on another's shelf without wishing to carry it off.

Charles Lamb classifies his borrowing friends thus: "Some read slow; some mean to read but don't read; and some neither read nor mean to read, but borrow to leave you an opinion of their sagacity."

Such public or semi-public libraries as existed in those days did not lend their treasures. They opened their doors to the favoured few, and beyond those doors their volumes were never suffered to go. Now our public libraries lend books — some of them at the rate of millions of issues annually. It is an easy

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matter for any one to obtain books by this kind of loan. But, instead of lessening the demand for private loans, this has only stimulated it. By throwing open the doors of our large collections, we have engendered a thirst for books that we cannot wholly satisfy. And it is so simple a matter to borrow a book from a public library that the borrower cannot help resenting an attitude of greater retentiveness on the part of a friendly private owner.

Possibly a mistake has been made in calling the distribution of books on a large scale by a public institution "lending" and "borrowing." It is really co-operative use by the public — a book club on a huge scale, where the public buys its own books, pays for housing them and making them accessible, and

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submits to the laws imposed under its own authority to regulate their equitable distribution. Does a man "borrow" when he receives a book under these circumstances? Surely not in the same sense as when he receives it from a man in whose ownership of it he does not share. We have, however, assimilated our library nomenclature to that properly employed when one man lends a book to another. Possibly we may be able to reciprocate by borrowing the public machinery for the protection and insurance of the private lender. History presents numerous instances of attempts to systematise the lending of private books and still more of generous owners who were willing to throw open their collections to the use of friends, or even of the public. Plutarch tells us that the library of

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Lucullus was "open to all." Brander Matthews has gathered some rather striking instances of book-owners who have been liberal of their store — the wagon-load of volumes sent to Dickens by Carlyle, when asked for aid with the *Tale of Two Cities*; the German book-lover whose book-plate bore the motto *Sibi et Amicis* — for self and friends; the kindred motto of Grolier, *Grolierii et Amicorum* — Grolier's and his friends'. Christian de Savigny went even further in his self-abnegation, for his plate bears the words *non mihi sed aliis*, not for self but for others. In his essay "On the Lending and Marking of Books," from which these items are quoted, Professor Matthews gives it as his opinion that, while the rare or curious book should never be lent, it would be churlish to re-

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fuse to a friend "the book of to-day, — the book in print, the book of commerce, which can be had anywhere for the asking." But if any one may obtain the book so easily, why borrow it? One is tempted to sympathise with Scaliger, whose book-plate bears the scriptural motto *Ite ad vendentes* — go to them that sell. It is the book difficult to obtain elsewhere that one wants to borrow, and that the owner should be willing to lend. Professor Matthews's rules, however, indicate that he is liberal in this respect, as in most others. They are as follows:

"I never lend a book which I cannot replace. I never lend a book of reference which I may need myself while it is out. I never lend a volume of a set. I never lend without taking a receipt, signed by the borrower. I never lend a

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book that I cannot afford to lose. I never lend a book to a man whom I know to be untidy, or careless, or inconsiderate; but I give a liberal construction to this regulation. And by means of these rules I am enabled to reconcile my conscience to the individual ownership of books."

Then there was the eccentric English philosopher, Henry Cavendish, who completely and satisfactorily solved the problem of book-lending by placing his large library in a house adjoining his residence and throwing it open to the public on the same terms as if it had been a public library. Borrowed books were charged to the borrowers, including himself, and their return in a specified time was insisted upon and enforced. The owner had no less use of his books than

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if they had been stored under his own roof. Possibly he lent them to no greater extent. But he lent them, and the public borrowed them, under conditions that protected the rights of both lender and borrowers, and ensured the return of the books in good condition. Think, if you please, what a general adoption of this plan might mean, especially if the owners of books should decide to promote efficiency and economy by pooling their property and housing it under a single roof!

Something of this kind was proposed in an article on "The Gentle Art of Book Lending," contributed to *The Nineteenth Century* (London, June, 1895), by Mr. George Somes Layard, who presented therein a scheme for co-operative book-lending by private own-

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ers. Briefly stated, his plan was to form a committee of the library-owners of a region, appoint an "honourary librarian or official go-between," possibly "some capable lady," and prepare a catalogue of the book resources of the district in private hands, which, among other things, should set forth the particular conditions under which each item was offered for use — whether by loan, outright, under the librarian's supervision, or at the owner's house. Machinery was elaborated — on paper — for dealing with each of these cases.

I cannot learn that this plan, or anything resembling it, was ever put into practice. The trouble is, of course, that it requires machinery — a central office or authority of some sort to operate it. It is futile to think of placing such ma-



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chinery in the hands of unpaid amateurs, and an expert staff is costly. None of these objections applies now that the machinery for just this kind of supervision and control has been elaborated and is supported at the expense of the community in our public libraries. It is perfectly possible, with the aid of these, to realise the philanthropic impulses and to carry out the schemes, which lack of the proper machinery has forced, in so many instances, to remain without practical expression. There is probably no town so small that it does not contain books worth borrowing. In many places the sum of such books in private hands is larger than that of all the volumes in public and institutional libraries. These books are often far more valuable than any that have been purchased, or could

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be afforded, by the local public library. Their owners, in many cases, would be perfectly willing to allow accredited scholars and writers to use the books, but the fact that they exist and the place where they are kept, are as safely hidden from the public as if the books were cast into the depths of the sea.

The local public library would usually be a safer place for these volumes in every way than the homes of their owners. The danger of loss from fire and from theft is less. The public library, in a small town, that should be able to receive from its citizens such an accretion as this would be fortunate indeed. That library, that town, those public-spirited citizens — are non-existent. We are individualists, one and all, where property rights are concerned, and

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every one of us wants his property under his thumb, not in a place where it is easy for some one else to use it. Even after he dies, instead of going to the public library by bequest, it and its fellows are sold and scattered among other selfish individualists, and the proceeds are given to the heirs to aid in providing them with steam yachts and motor cars. If we are to devise means to release this vast stock of books for the use of those who are able to profit by them and to turn them to the public service, we shall have, I am afraid, to do it in such a way as not to remove the books from the custody of their owners.

This means a plan like that elaborated by Mr. Layard, except that his central committee of amateurs would be replaced by the local library board. His

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“capable lady” would still be in the saddle, for most of our librarians are women ; but her capabilities would, without doubt, be increased by her library-school training, her years of experience, and her knowledge of local conditions and personalities. Almost every town of any size has now, in connection with its public library, machinery for informing the public what books that library has and where they are, together with facilities for using them, lending them, tracing their whereabouts and ensuring their safe return. All this machinery is administered under public auspices and its cost is met by taxation. If we are not to waste time, money and material on a huge scale, whatever is done to systematise the use of valuable private books by others than their owners and to see that those

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owners do not lose them, must be done by utilising this machinery.

This may be accomplished very simply and effectively in the following way: Let every owner of a book that he is willing to let others use send its name to the local public library, stating at the same time whether the borrower may take it home, or must use it in the library building, or must consult it in the owner's house. Any other conditions on which its use is granted should, of course, be stated at the same time. Cards for all these books should then be inserted in the library catalogue precisely as if the library owned them. The author card might bear also the owner's name and address, with the conditions of use, or this information might be kept in a separate index, the catalogue card

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bearing simply some abbreviation to denote the fact that the book was privately owned and in the custody of the owner.

The advantages of this plan would be threefold — to the public, to the library, and to the book-owner. The book-user would be able to ascertain not only what books were in the public library, on some subject in which he was interested; but what and how many books, accessible to him, were in the town. Those in the hands of private owners willing to lend were, of course, accessible to him before this enlargement of the catalogue, but he did not know it, and even if he had known it, he might have hesitated to ask. Now the library asks for him, and his relations as a borrower with the owner as a lender are systematised and facilitated by the use of the whole machine

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that has been elaborated and perfected by the library to this end.

The library finds its available stock of books practically multiplied. It is able to satisfy more of its readers than before, and to satisfy just that class whose satisfaction means most to the library, doing it at a minimum expenditure of energy and with machinery already provided.

The book-owner sees certain of his books actually performing a public service. He finds that it is possible to express his willingness to lend, which has always existed in a vague form, in terms of such service. He finds the machinery for putting the books in the hands of those who will use them to advantage, ready to hand and able not only to place his property but to insure its proper care and safe return.

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Moreover, not only is he enabled to lend when it is proper that he should do so, but it also becomes easy, and even necessary, for him to refuse when the conditions are unsatisfactory. When he is asked for the loan of a book, under the old conditions, it will be simple and quite proper for him to answer, if he desires to do so, that he has placed the lending of his books in the hands of the public library and that he desires to use its machinery in all cases. The borrower is put to little inconvenience, for he can reach the public library easily by telephone. The only difference is that his act is duly registered and that he is made to return the book when he is through with it, all by the operation of a system to which he is accustomed. He might have resented the charging of the



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book by the owner and the receipt of an overdue notice from him; but the same acts excite no resentment when preformed by the library as a regular part of its administration.

A plan of this kind has so much in its favour from all standpoints, that an advocate of it runs the danger of overlooking the special advantage that alone excuses the inclusion of it in a series of articles on the making of a private library. This advantage is its contribution toward the limitation and the conservation of such a library. Limitation, because with free permission to borrow from his neighbours, one may omit many purchases that he would otherwise feel like making; conservation, because, as we have already seen, danger of loss from such free offering of his own books

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is reduced to a minimum. Possibly these points need a word or two of amplification. The ideal private library is a collection of intimates. There are plausible reasons for going beyond this; but the book-lover should have himself well under control when he yields to them; that way lies bankruptcy. Most of them are less plausible now than they used to be. There is the necessity for books of reference. Every one must have a dictionary and a cyclopedia — perhaps one or two foreign lexicons. Beyond this it is hardly necessary to go. Most of us consult other reference books than these infrequently, and we may find them at the Public Library. There are the books that have been read and laid aside — candidates for the collection that have not passed muster. Why buy these at all?

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They may be tested by borrowing them from the Library. There is the book that is too rarely used or too costly for a small public library to buy, which tempts you for some personal reason. Do you know that each of three friends of yours, in your town, have yielded to these very considerations and have bought the book? If the plan outlined above were in force, you would know it, and your appreciation of the fact that one copy would amply supply the demand would operate to limit your purchases, to the great relief of your purse. Two of your neighbours would be wishing that they had been similarly restrained. In course of time, the co-operating book-owners of a town, in conference with the librarian of the Public Library, may find it profitable to work out a systematic limitation

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of the field of purchase, similar to that agreed upon in Chicago, and some other places, by several large libraries. In cases where it would obviously be a waste of money for more than one library to buy an expensive work, this agreement specifies the library that shall buy it, one specialising in science, for instance, another in art and a third in history. Whichever buys the work it is freely accessible to all citizens. The extension of this plan to private buyers ought not to be difficult, in places where the scheme of co-operation above outlined is already in operation; and the advantage to book-owners, individually and collectively, is obvious.

The second point — that relating to conservation — has possibly been insisted upon sufficiently in the early part of this

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chapter, but the function of the library as a guarantor of safe return needs a little more discussion. Doubtless, books lent in this way would follow Professor Brander Matthews's first rule in being chiefly those possible to replace. Only in such cases has guaranty or insurance a proper meaning. One may "insure" the Mona Lisa for a million dollars; but this does not mean that it could ever be replaced. When a man insures his life, he does not do it with the thought of avoiding death, but of preventing the loss which death would otherwise occasion. The money that he earns when alive and devotes to his family's support can be replaced, dollar for dollar, by that paid over by the insurance company. In like manner, a library cannot guarantee the return, to the owner, of the actual

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copy of a book that he has lent; but it can guarantee the purchase of another copy when the book is replaceable. When a book-owner, therefore, lends a book through a library, he is insured against loss with a thoroughness that would be impossible if the book went directly to the individual who is to use it. The library not only has more powerful machinery to enforce the return of the book, but it has greater resources and greater responsibility to pay for it if it proves to be irrecoverably lost. Also, there is a strong likelihood that it will be able to recoup itself by enforcing payment from the loser.

And this insurance does not cost the lender a cent. He pays for it by his willingness to do public service — one of the few cases, if it is not the only case,

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where such willingness is worth actual cash. Owing to it, a man's book, lent in this way, would be safer than when locked up in his own bookcase without insurance. To equal it, the owner would have to take out policies, not only against fire, but against flood, tornado, burglary and every other imagined loss; for the library's guaranty has absolutely no limitation, except that of the time during which the book is in its charge. To wipe out this limitation also, the owner need only use the library as a permanent place of deposit; which brings us around again to the position taken near the beginning of this article. It was there hinted that human selfishness would prevent any such general abandonment of private custody. But perhaps, when the owner begins to look at the

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matter from this standpoint of insurance, human selfishness may turn about and pull in the other direction; who knows? The elimination of waste and the promotion of efficiency by co-operation and consolidation is in the air. The trust is an example in the field of commerce and industry. Charitable and civic organisations are combining and establishing great indexes to their work, freely accessible to all the societies concerned, so that none need try to do something already well done by some one else.

If book-owners who are willing to be book-lenders, all the more because they occasionally feel the need of becoming borrowers, will follow suit, we shall presently see the ownership of books exalted into a civic virtue. And the bibliophile will love his books more than ever,



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when bibliophily shall, in some such fashion as this, have become recuperative.

He who is exploring a canyon in the Far West is ever and anon tempted to turn aside into some fascinating side canyon. The purpose of his exploration is not thwarted thereby, and, indeed, it may be aided and supplemented, provided only he returns in the end to the original valley and continues his course down the stream.

So, in the chapters that end here, although we have turned, now and again, to discuss side issues, it is to be hoped that these have served, in the end, to clarify and enlighten the main stream of thought, which is that an American's private library must be born of personal interest and fed upon love. We Ameri-

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cans are a practical people, but we are at the same time the most idealistic of nations. To buy a book because some one else likes it is not a practical proceeding, but to be guided, in purchasing, by the impulse of interest and love is both practical and ideal. And it is in accord with the recent awakening of our social and civic consciousness that what we do by and for ourselves should be considered always in its relationships with what we do with others — what we may do for each other. Hence we cannot consider our private book-buying apart from our public book-buying. The Public Library is in a position to aid us at every step and we in turn should be able and willing to aid it; for by so doing we are merely helping our neighbours.

If we are ever to give the lie to those

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prophets of evil who tell us that democracy is for the small nations alone, never for the great, and that as we grow, our old customs and our old laws must perforce become more and more a cloak for oligarchy and privilege — if we are ever to confound those who sneer at popular education and despise popular government, it must be by such practical co-operation as this — a demonstration that, at bottom, private and public activities are but different aspects of the same thing — that what the individual has, he holds in trust for his fellows, and what the community has it must place at the disposal of each citizen in the fullest and freest way compatible with its own existence and progress.

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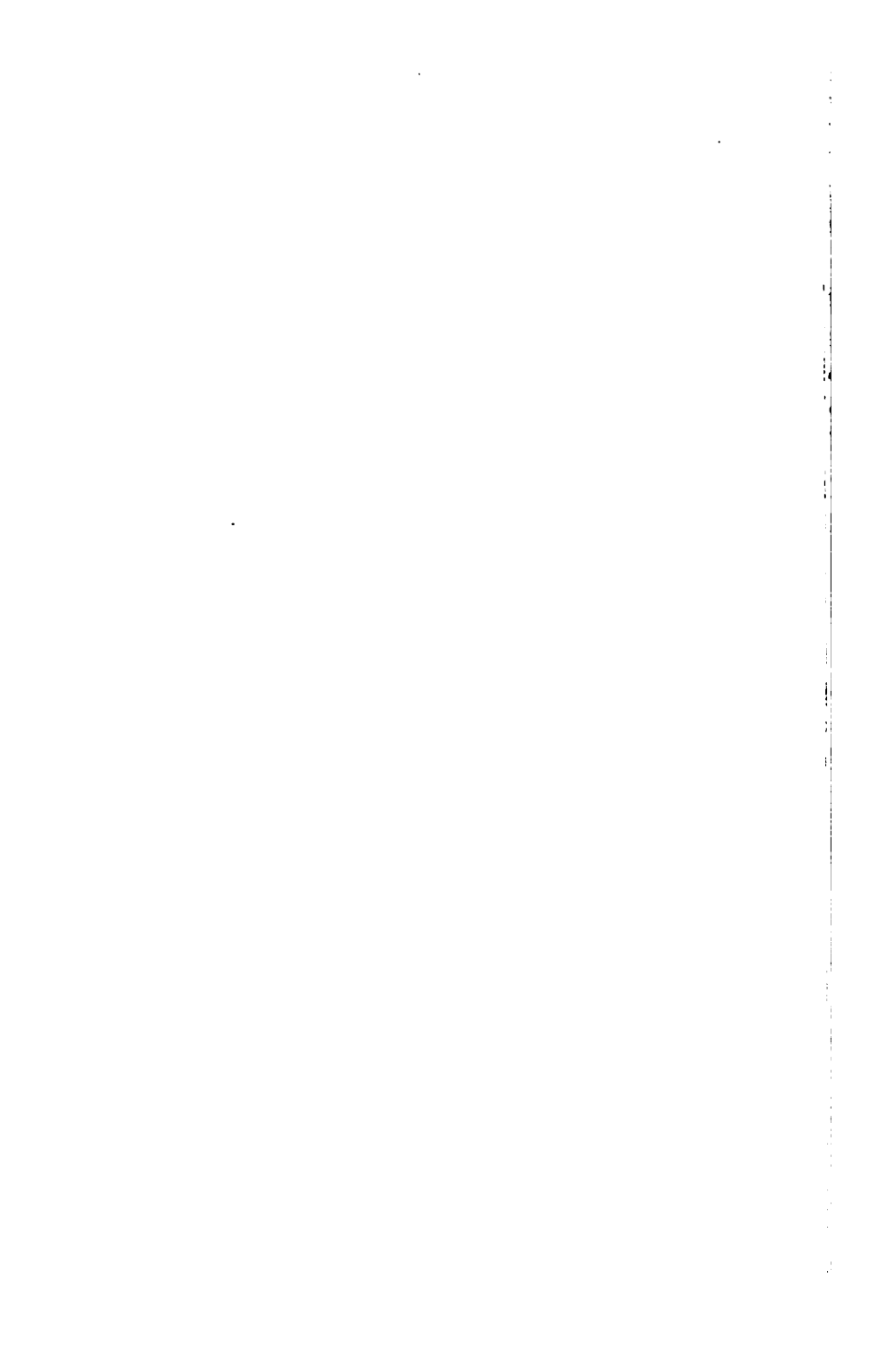
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